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ABSTRACT

Formal and informal educational options available to older persons are briefly described, with attention to classroom courses, correspondence/home study courses, credit by examination, summer/weekend learning vacations, external degree programs, discussion groups, and self-study. Classes may be offered at public and private schools, community colleges, colleges and universities, college centers for older learners, and literacy programs. Tape recorders as well as written materials can be used for correspondence and home study courses. Older persons who were unable to complete a high school education can take the General Educational Development test. They can also use the knowledge they have acquired to earn college credit through the College Level Examination Program. Many college departments permit students to take examinations that have been prepared by faculty in order to receive credit for specific courses offered by the college. The Elderhostel program allows persons over age 60 to spend a week living and studying on a college campus, and the alumni associations of many colleges conduct organizational educational programs. Additional options include the Institute of Lifetime Learning minicourses, the Great Decisions Program of the Foreign Policy Association, and the Great Books Program. (SW)

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LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER PERSONS

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INTRODUCTION

When American Association of Retired Persons' founder Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus established the Institute of Lifetime Learning in 1963, few educational opportunities were available for older Americans. But the educational climate for older students has changed dramatically.

Today, learning opportunities for older persons are more common. By the thousands, older Americans are taking advantage of formal educational options for completing high school diploma work and college or graduate degrees. Others seek skills needed for a part-time job or a second career to augment income. And many study to prepare for volunteer activities, to become informed citizens, or for the sheer joy of learning.

This booklet, published as a public service of the Institute of Lifetime Learning, describes in some detail many formal and informal educational options available to older persons. For whatever reasons you wish to continue your education, we hope this brochure will suggest opportunities that will provide meaningful learning experiences. The educational power of an informed citizenry is essential for a better America.

Jack Carlson
Executive Director



CLASSROOM COURSES

Public and Private Schools

Adult education courses at public and private schools provide an excellent opportunity for older persons to obtain training, or retraining, or to study for personal pleasure. While some adult programs also allow students to work toward a high school diploma, courses are generally non-credit and are offered primarily in the evening. Some school systems provide special reduced rates for older persons. For information about programs in your community, contact your board of education.

Community Colleges

The nation's 1,200 community and junior colleges provide two-year programs corresponding to the first two years of a four-year college, or which emphasize technical and vocational training. Graduates receive the Associate in Arts degree. Since these schools are non-residential and geared to adults, they offer older students special degree or non-degree programs. Classes are scheduled during convenient daytime or evening hours and are often held at off-campus locations.

In some cases, students can audit a credit course, meaning that they attend classes, but are not required to turn in assignments or take tests. Community colleges generally have a more reasonable fee structure than do four-year colleges and universities.

Check your local library or write for the *Community, Junior and Technical College Directory* available at \$35 from Publishers Services, 80 S Early Street, Alexandria, VA 22304.

The admissions office at your nearest community college can give you information about degree programs. The school's community services office can tell you about continuing education (non-credit or non-degree) programs. The post-secondary commission of your state department of education also should be able to tell you where to locate local programs. You can write this commission at your state capital.

Colleges and Universities

Four-year colleges and universities primarily offer credit courses for bachelor or graduate degrees, although students also may be allowed to audit credit courses. Many schools also sponsor day and evening continuing education programs, sometimes at convenient extension branches throughout the community.

If you are interested in registering as a regular degree student or in auditing credit courses, you should contact a college's administration office. Like community colleges, most four-year institutions maintain a special continuing education office to provide information about non-degree programs.



CLASSROOM COURSES (continued)

A directory of 3,000 accredited colleges and universities, *The Education Directory*, published each year by the National Center for Education Statistics, is generally available at local libraries.

A growing number of colleges and universities now offer older persons free tuition or charge reduced tuition fees or have special programs. The Institute of Lifetime Learning conducted a national survey of institutions of higher education to determine which schools extend free or reduced tuition benefits or have programs specially designed for the older adult.

You can obtain a list of these institutions by writing to: Tuition Listing for (State), AARP Fulfillment, D 12401, P.O. Box 2400, Long Beach, CA 90801.

Some students may be eligible for scholarships and other financial assistance from the schools they attend. To find out if you qualify, contact your school's financial aid or fellowship office. You might check your local library for the *Annual Register of Grant Support* published by Marquis Academic Media and *Grants Register* published by Martins Press.

Another useful publication is *The Student Guide: Five Federal Financial Aid Programs 1987-88* which identifies and describes federal aid programs and procedures for application. For a free copy, write: Federal Student Aid Program, P.O. Box 84, Washington, DC 20044.

College Centers for Older Learners

Programs designed especially for older persons are growing in popularity at colleges and universities around the country. These programs offer continuing education to persons interested in educational, cultural, and social opportunities without the pressure of tests or grades. The emphasis is on the learning experience. Subjects may be academic or vocational in nature and often the courses are determined by students and taught by their peers.

For more information about these programs, write: *College Centers for Older Learners*, D 12489, AARP Fulfillment, P.O. Box 2400, Long Beach, CA 90801.

Literacy Programs

There is a national movement underway to eliminate illiteracy. Most communities have a network of teachers and volunteers in place to assist people who want to learn to read or to improve their reading skills. Many people with limited reading abilities need information and assistance in enrolling in these programs.

For free information about local literacy programs write: Literacy Brochure, D 12755, AARP Fulfillment, P.O. Box 2400, Long Beach, CA 90801.



CORRESPONDENCE/ HOME STUDY COURSES

Correspondence and home study programs make it possible for people to study at home at their own pace. Colleges, universities, and private organizations offer courses on a variety of subjects, ranging from home mechanics and interior decorating to Shakespeare and Spanish.

Most courses for either high school or college credit are open to any adult regardless of educational background, although some specialized subjects require prerequisite study. Credit students prepare written assignments which are reviewed and returned to them with comments by a specially assigned instructor. In some instances, instructors may send students cassette tapes or telephone them personally to discuss lessons.

Some colleges and universities cooperate with local television stations to present televised courses. Viewers can earn college credit by completing reading and other assignments.

In most cases, college credit earned through correspondence can be applied to a degree program. Before signing up for a course, however, check with the college admissions office to make sure the courses selected are acceptable in a credit program. Schools usually will apply approximately 30 credit hours of correspondence work toward a degree.

Courses offered on the high school level are generally in liberal arts subjects. Credit can be awarded through a local high school or a state department of education.

Credit and certification may not be important to you. If self-enrichment and personal enjoyment are your goals, you can enroll in most credit courses on a non-credit basis. If you audit courses, you will receive the same material as credit students, but will not be required to turn in assignments. Many correspondence programs also include special non-credit courses on subjects not usually included in a regular high school or college curriculum.

For more information about correspondence courses, a publication, *Guide to Independent Study Through Correspondence Instruction* (\$8.95 plus \$1.75 postage and handling), is available from the National University Continuing Education Association, Peterson's Book Order Dept., P.O. Box 2123, Princeton, NJ 08543. The schools listed are all accredited institutions offering credit and non-credit courses at the junior high, high school, and both undergraduate and graduate college levels.

The National Home Study Council, representing more than 100 private correspondence schools, publishes a *Directory of Accredited Home Study Schools*. You can write for this free booklet from NHSC, 1601 18th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20009. Courses are generally of a technical/vocational nature; some associate and bachelor degree programs are offered.

Audio Courses

Audio courses offer the enrichment of home study through the use of a tape recorder as well as printed materials. The University of Wisconsin-Extension offers audio/print courses that enable people to work toward a college degree or to study informally a broad variety of topics. One does not need to be a resident of Wisconsin to participate.

For those interested in earning college credit, audio programs are accompanied by text books and a student study guide. Faculty members provide support through the mail and with telephone consultation. Progress is measured by written assignments and examinations. The cost for tuition, audio, and print materials for a three-credit course is approximately \$210. For those who do not want credit, the tapes and print materials can be purchased for \$30 to \$50. For a copy of a catalogue, write: Independent Study, University of Wisconsin-Extension, 432 N. Kade Street, Madison, WI 53706.



CREDIT BY EXAMINATION

High School Equivalency Examinations

Older persons who were unable to complete a high school education can take the General Educational Development (GED) tests sponsored by the American Council on Education and the state departments of education. The five GED tests (writing skills, social studies, science, interpreting literature and the arts, and mathematics) are administered frequently at more than 3,000 testing centers in the United States and Canada. The GED tests are available in large print, audiocassette, and Braille editions.

Diplomas issued to persons who pass the GED tests are authorized by the local schools and/or state departments of education. These credentials are recognized widely and can be used when applying for further education and training, as well as for employment.

You can take the GED tests without attending classes, but classes are available for persons who wish assistance in studying for high school completion. These classes are sponsored by local high school systems, community colleges, and other agencies. GED review books are available in most bookstores and libraries for those who wish to study on their own.

For information about taking the GED tests, or for the locations of high school completion classes, contact your local school system or a community college. For a copy of the AARP publication, "Wish You Had Finished High School?" (D13048), write to AARP Fulfillment, P.O. Box 2400, Long Beach, CA 90801.

College Credit Examinations

Adults can use the knowledge they have acquired to earn college credit through the College Level Examination Program (CLEP). Tests are available on a wide range of topics, and students select those which they can apply to a college degree program. Check with the college or university you plan to attend to determine if CLEP

credit will be accepted, or write to the address below for a listing of CLEP Colleges. As a general rule, community colleges accept CLEP credit.

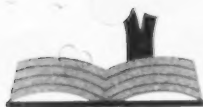
CLEP tests are administered the third week of each month at more than 900 test centers. The cost of each exam is approximately \$35.

For further information, write for the free booklet which includes a registration form: "Moving with CLEP," CN 6600, Educational Testing Service, Box 56-D, Departmental Examinations, Princeton, NJ 08541-6600.

Departmental Examinations

Many college departments (such as English or history departments) permit students to take examinations that have been prepared by faculty members in order to receive credit for specific courses offered by the college. If you feel you have a good understanding of a subject you can ask the department chairperson for permission to take an examination to demonstrate that you have already mastered the course content and do not need to restudy the subject.

The DANTES/Subject Standardized Tests program complements CLEP with examinations in applied technology, business, languages, mathematics, science, and social science areas. The applied technology area may be of particular interest to adults entering a technical or trade school. Examinations in that area include forestry, auto mechanics, carpentry, drawing and graphics, electronics, radio servicing, television servicing, air-conditioning, refrigeration, and heating. Most of the examinations carry a three-credit-hour recommendation by the American Council on Education. For a free brochure, write: Educational Testing Service, Box 56-D, Princeton, NJ 08541. For a list of institutions administering the exams and granting credit for them, write: DANTES Program Office, P-166, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ 08541.



SUMMER/WEEKEND LEARNING VACATIONS

Elderhostel

Started in New England in 1975, the Elderhostel program allows persons over 60 years of age to spend a week on a college campus, living in a dormitory and taking courses. Colleges and universities also may offer sightseeing or other extracurricular activities. Programs are one week in length (Sunday-Saturday) and arrangements can be made for longer visits. Costs are approximately \$220 for one week. The fee includes room and board, three daily classes, use of campus facilities, and various campus events and activities. For information about the program and participating schools, write: Elderhostel, Suite 400, 80 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116.

AARP Elderhostel Scholarship Awards

Each year AARP's Institute of Lifetime Learning grants approximately 200 scholarship awards for attendance at Elderhostel programs throughout the United States. Persons interested in applying for an award must be at least 60 years of age, a member of AARP, and have given a significant amount of volunteer service in their communities. Special consideration is given to those who could have difficulty paying the Elderhostel fee. For an application, write: Elderhostel Application Form, D 12309, AARP Fulfillment, P.O. Box 2400, Long Beach, CA 90801.

Other Options

The alumni associations of many colleges and universities conduct organized educational programs. These programs may be scheduled during the summer months or throughout the year, and vary in cost. If you attended a college, contact your alumni association about its programs.

Learning Vacations (Fifth Edition) is a revised directory of more than 500 educational sojourns, which range in price from budget to luxury, combining learning with recreational opportunities. Entries are divided into ten topical chapter headings such as "Alumni College Seminars," "Arts and Crafts," "Writers' Conferences," and "Music and Dance Festivals."

Published by Peterson's Guides, it is priced at \$9.95 and is available at leading bookstores or by mail from the publisher at 166 Bunn Drive, Princeton, NJ 09540. Add \$1.75 for shipping charges if you order *Learning Vacations* by mail.



EXTERNAL DEGREE PROGRAMS

External degree programs offered by some colleges and universities grant credit for a variety of learning experiences, such as credit by examination, independent study, reading courses, seminars in the United States and abroad, and even "life experience." Usually these programs require little or no campus work.

Who Offers Part-Time Degree Programs contains information on evening, weekend, summer, and external degree programs available from accredited colleges and universities in the United States. Send \$7.95 plus \$1.75 for postage and handling (prepaid) to Peterson's Guides, P.O. Box 2123, Princeton, NJ 08540.

The publication, *New Paths to Learning: College Education for Adults*, explores nontraditional ways of pursuing a college education, including television and weekend courses and life experience credit. To request a copy, send \$1.00 to: Public Affairs Committee, 381 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016.

For information on nontraditional graduate degree programs offered through 112 institutions of higher education, you can purchase the *Innovative Graduate Programs Directory* for \$8.00 from Empire State College, P.O. Box 88, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866.

The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning has information on educational institutions which give credit for learning from job or life experiences. Write to the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, Suite 203, 10840 Little Patuxent Parkway, Columbia, MD 21044.



DISCUSSION GROUPS

Institute of Lifetime Learning Minicourses

The Institute of Lifetime Learning launched a minicourse program in 1977 to help interested older persons learn more about a wide range of topics. Each minicourse introduces and gives an overview of major subject areas such as anthropology, mythology, physics, American history, linguistics, or literature. Each booklet contains a bibliography of suggested reading material, self-tests, and guidelines on organizing a discussion group with your friends or a club. Minicourses are free of charge. For a list of available minicourse subjects write: Minicourse Order Form, D168, AARP Fulfillment, P.O. Box 2400, Long Beach, CA 90801.

The Institute recently produced its first video minicourse based on the Emmy award-winning series, *The Constitution: That Delicate Balance*. There are six programs in the series. Each explores a controversial human rights question and the constitutional issues it raises. Group discussion follows the viewing of each videotape. To borrow the Constitution Video Minicourse, write: The Constitution, D 12828, Program Scheduling Office, 1909 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20049.

Foreign Policy Association

The Great Decisions Program of the Foreign Policy Association gives Americans of all backgrounds the opportunity to learn about eight major foreign policy issues each year. The Foreign Policy Association builds and sustains an informed citizenry. Individual opinions on the issues are tabulated and presented to major political figures in the United States, as well as to the news media. Discussion groups may already be organized in your community, or you and your friends may organize a group. For a brochure describing the program, write: Foreign Policy Association, 729 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10019.



DISCUSSION GROUPS (continued)

Domestic Policy Association

The Domestic Policy Association is a national network of local organizations and individuals committed to the study and discussion of policy issues and the communication of grassroots views to national public policy makers.

Domestic Policy Association sponsors community forums every year and has developed materials for Home Study Circles. For more information, write: Domestic Policy Association, 100 Commons Road, Dayton, OH 45459-2777

Great Books

The Great Books Program is based on the idea that people can help one another learn by reading and discussing some of the best books of the past 2,500 years. Discussion groups usually meet every other week for two hours. There are no requirements except the desire to learn. The Great Books Foundation publishes selected readings from the classics for discussion and offers training courses for discussion leaders. The Foundation can help you start your own Great Books group or can refer you to groups currently operating in your area. The only cost for this discussion series is for the reading material which is less than \$20. For more information about the program and the selected readings, or for referrals, write: The Great Books Foundation, 40 E. Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611



SELF-STUDY

Libraries

Books are only one of the many resources to be found at the local library. Magazines, newspapers, video and audio cassettes, recordings, and art work retained at the library can provide many hours of learning enjoyment. Libraries have access to a variety of large-print books as well as talking books for the visually handicapped, and closed-captioned video tapes for the hearing impaired. Librarians can help you research a particular subject or provide referral services which can direct you to valuable resources in your community.

Museums

Museums are unique places to learn. By browsing or by enrolling in the organized courses some museums offer, you can uncover a wealth of cultural, social, or historical information.

The Institute of Lifetime Learning publishes a free brochure entitled, *Museum Opportunities for Older Persons*. This brochure calls attention to the varied pleasures that museums offer older persons and suggests ways to become involved as volunteers in museum settings. Write: Museum Opportunities, D 12211, AARP Fulfillment, P.O. Box 2400, Long Beach, CA 90801.

Telecourses

Without leaving your living room, you may be able to obtain college credit or simply tune in for an educational change of pace. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, in conjunction with selected colleges and universities across the country, funded a series of courses for broadcast over public television stations. The courses run for a 13-week semester and are usually divided into 26 half-hour segments. Texts and other materials are available to accompany each course. Check your local college or university to find out if it participates in the telecourse program; if so, your local public television station can tell you program air times. For a brochure about telecourses contact: Annenberg CPB Project, 1111 16th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036.



INSTITUTE OF LIFETIME LEARNING/ AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED PERSONS

The Institute of Lifetime Learning is a continuing education service of the Program Department of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP).

The Institute promotes opportunities for older persons to continue to learn, prepare for new careers, and become involved in media and new technologies. As a resource center on lifetime learning and aging, it publishes materials related to education for older persons and helps them establish discussion groups. It also conducts surveys, initiates workshops, and provides technical assistance to organizations interested in developing educational programs for older persons.

Institute of Lifetime Learning
American Association of Retired Persons
1909 K Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20049

AARP

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) is the nation's largest organization of older Americans with a membership exceeding 27 million. A nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, AARP serves its members through legislative representation, educational and community service programs, and direct membership benefits.

AMERICAN
ASSOCIATION
OF RETIRED
PERSONS

1909 K Street, N.W.
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